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The Cultural Policy Studies Project

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THE REAL ROOT CAUSES OF VIOLENT CRIME: THE BREAKDOWN OF MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION

Policymakers at last are coming to recognize the connection between the breakdown of American families and various social problems. The unfolding debate over welfare reform, for instance, has been shaped by the wide acceptance in recent years that children born into single-parent families are much more likely than children of intact families to fall into poverty and welfare dependence themselves in later years. These children, in fact, face a daunting array of problems.[1]

While this link between illegitimacy and chronic welfare dependency now is better understood, policymakers also need to appreciate another strong and disturbing pattern evident in scholarly studies: the link between illegitimacy and violent crime and between the lack of parental attachment and violent crime. Without an understanding of the root causes of criminal behavior—how criminals are formed—Members of Congress and state legislators cannot understand why whole sectors of society, particularly in urban areas, are being torn apart by crime. And without that knowledge, sound policymaking is impossible.

A review of the empirical evidence in the professional literature of the social sciences gives policymakers an insight into the root causes of crime. Consider, for instance:

1 See Patrick F. Fagan, "Rising Illegitimacy: America's Social Catastrophe," Heritage Foundation *F.Y.I.* No. 19, June 29, 1994.

- ☞ Over the past thirty years, the rise in violent crime parallels the rise in families abandoned by fathers.
- ☞ High-crime neighborhoods are characterized by high concentrations of families abandoned by fathers.
- ☞ State-by-state analysis by Heritage scholars indicates that a 10 percent increase in the percentage of children living in single-parent homes leads typically to a 17 percent increase in juvenile crime.
- ☞ The rate of violent teenage crime corresponds with the number of families abandoned by fathers.
- ☞ The type of aggression and hostility demonstrated by a future criminal often is foreshadowed in unusual aggressiveness as early as age five or six.
- ☞ The future criminal tends to be an individual rejected by other children as early as the first grade who goes on to form his own group of friends, often the future delinquent gang.

On the other hand:

- ☞ Neighborhoods with a high degree of religious practice are not high-crime neighborhoods.
- ☞ Even in high-crime inner-city neighborhoods, well over 90 percent of children from safe, stable homes do not become delinquents. By contrast only 10 percent of children from unsafe, unstable homes in these neighborhoods avoid crime.
- ☞ Criminals capable of sustaining marriage gradually move away from a life of crime after they get married.
- ☞ The mother's strong affectionate attachment to her child is the child's best buffer against a life of crime.
- ☞ The father's authority and involvement in raising his children are also a great buffer against a life of crime.

The scholarly evidence, in short, suggests that at the heart of the explosion of crime in America is the loss of the capacity of fathers and mothers to be responsible in caring for the children they bring into the world. This loss of love and guidance at the intimate levels of marriage and family has broad social consequences for children and for the wider community. The empirical evidence shows that too many young men and women from broken families tend to have a much weaker sense of connection with their neighborhood and are prone to exploit its members to satisfy their unmet needs or desires. This contributes to a loss of a sense of community and to the disintegration of neighborhoods into social chaos and violent crime. If policymakers are to deal with the root causes of crime, therefore, they must deal with the rapid rise of illegitimacy.

OFFICIAL WASHINGTON'S VIEW OF CRIME

The professional literature in criminology is quite at odds with orthodox thinking in official Washington. Many lawmakers in Congress and in the states assume that the high level of crime in America must have its roots in material conditions, such as poor employment opportunities and a shortage of adequately funded social programs. But Members of Congress and other policymakers cannot understand the root causes of crime if they insist on viewing it purely in material terms. This view blinds policymakers to the personal aspects of crime, including moral failure, the refusal to exercise personal responsibility, and the inability or refusal to enter into family and community relationships based on love, respect, and attachment both to the broader community and to a common code of conduct.

The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, supported by the Clinton Administration and enacted last year, perfectly embodies official Washington's thinking about crime.[2] It provides for billions of dollars in new spending, adding 15 new social programs on top of a welfare system that has cost taxpayers $5 trillion since the "War on Poverty" was declared in 1965.[3] There is no reason to suppose the programs will have any significant effect. Since 1965, welfare spending has increased 800 percent in real terms, while the number of major felonies per capita today is roughly three times the rate before 1960.[4] As Senator Phil Gramm (R-TX) says, "If social spending stopped crime we would be the safest country in the world."[5]

Senator Joseph Biden (D-DE), former chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and a major sponsor of the recent crime bill, summed up the predominant view of crime prevention: "These [social services] are all good programs. They are all designed to do the same thing—give these kids something to say yes to." Likewise, the Department of Justice's report, "Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent and Chronic Juvenile Offenders," accurately diagnoses the roots of the problem (in terms of family, religion, and moral formation), but then recommends a long list of new federal social programs on top of the current programs.[6]

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2 For an analysis of this federal crime bill, see William J. Bennett, "It's Time to Throw the Switch on the Federal Crime Bill," Heritage Foundation *Issue Bulletin* No. 196, June 28, 1994. See also Paul J. McNulty, "Rhetoric vs. Reality: A Closer Look at the Congressional Crime Bill," Heritage Foundation *Issue Bulletin* No. 159, May 16, 1994.

3 Scott A. Hodge, "The Crime Bill: Few Cops, Many Social Workers," Heritage Foundation *Issue Bulletin* No. 201, August 2, 1994, p. 1.

4 Scott A. Hodge, "Crime Rates and Welfare Spending," Heritage Foundation *F.Y.I.* No. 24, August 10, 1994, p. 2.

5 "Crossfire," August 23, 1994.

6 The following admittedly is not very clear, but it is a fair and excellent example of politically correct thinking on crime at the top levels of the Clinton Administration. From the *Interdepartmental Working Group on Violence: Report to the President and the Domestic Policy Council*, January 1994: "The only way to make progress against America's epidemic of violence is to marshal and coordinate efforts of communities, the private sector, and federal, state and local governments.... [T]he federal government must be a model and move to construct interdepartmental approaches and coalitions to assist local communities in their efforts.... Violence results from a multitude of complex factors; only broad, holistic and multi-disciplinary solutions hold real promise."

But the conventional assumptions about the root causes of crime—and thus the solutions—are wide of the mark:

Poverty and Unemployment

The central proposition in official Washington's thinking about crime is that poverty is the primary cause of crime. In its simplest form, this contention is absurd; if it were true, there would have been more crime in the past, when more people were poorer. And in poorer nations, the crime rates would be higher than in the United States. More significantly, history defies the assumption that deteriorating economic circumstances breed crime (and improving conditions reduce it). Instead, America's crime rate gradually rose during the long period of real economic growth: 1905 to 1933. As the Great Depression set in and incomes dropped, the crime rate also dropped. It rose again between 1965 and 1974 when incomes rose steadily. Most recently, during the recession of 1982, there was a slight dip in crime, not an increase.

What is true of the general population is also true of black Americans. For example, between 1950 and 1974 black income in Philadelphia almost doubled, and homicides more than doubled. Even the Reverend Jesse Jackson, whose prescriptions for social reform mirror conventional liberal ideology, admits that black-on-black homicide is not an issue of poverty.[7] The crime rate in other communities also shows no link between low incomes and crime. The Chinese in San Francisco in the mid-1960s, for instance, had the lowest family income of any ethnic group (less than $4,000 per year) but next to no crime: only 5 Chinese in all of California were then in prison.[8]

Race and Crime

There is a widespread belief that race is a major explanatory cause of crime. This belief is anchored in the large disparity in crime rates between whites and blacks. However, a closer look at the data shows that the real variable is not race but family structure and all that it implies in commitment and love between adults. The incidence of broken families is much higher in the black community. Douglas Smith and G. Roger Jarjoura, in a major 1988 study of 11,000 individuals, found that "the percentage of single-parent households with children between the ages of 12 and 20 is significantly associated with rates of violent crime and burglary." The same study makes clear that the widespread popular assumption that there is an association between race and crime is false. Illegitimacy is the key factor. It is the absence of marriage, and the failure to form and maintain intact families, that explains the incidence of high crime in a neighborhood among whites as well as blacks.[9] This contradicts conventional wisdom.

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7 Daniel Ruberstein, "Cut Cultural Root of Rising Crime," *Insight*, August 8, 1994.

8 *Ibid.*, quoting James Q. Wilson and Richard Herrnstein, *Crime and Human Nature* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985).

9 Douglas Smith and G. Roger Jarjoura, "Social Structure and Criminal Victimization," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (February 1988), pp. 27-52.

FIVE STEPS TO VIOLENT CRIME

The scholarly literature indicates a pronounced pattern of circumstances and social evolution that makes violent criminal behavior very likely.

STEP ONE: Parental neglect and abandonment in early home life.

- ✗ When the baby is born, his father has already abandoned the mother.
- ✗ If his parents are married, they are likely to divorce by the third year.
- ✗ He is raised in a neighborhood with a high concentration of single-parent families.
- ✗ He does not become securely attached to his mother during the critical early years of life.
- ✗ His child care frequently changes.
- ✗ The adults in his life frequently quarrel and vent their frustrations physically.
- ✗ There is much harshness in his home.
- ✗ He is deprived of affection.
- ✗ He becomes a hostile, anxious, and hyperactive child.
- ✗ He is difficult to manage at age three and is a behavior problem.
- ✗ He lacks his father's presence and attention and becomes increasingly aggressive.

STEP TWO: The embryonic gang becomes a place to belong.

- ✗ He is by now both hyperactive and difficult to endure.
- ✗ His parent's supervision is inconsistent and explosive.
- ✗ He satisfies his needs by exploiting others.
- ✗ At age five or six he hits his mother.
- ✗ In first grade his aggressive behavior causes problems for others.
- ✗ He is becoming more difficult for the school to handle.
- ✗ He is socially rejected at school by normal children.
- ✗ His life is now characterized by his own aggressive behavior, his aggressive peers, and his hostile home life.
- ✗ He searches for and finds acceptance among similarly aggressive and hostile children.
- ✗ He and his friends are slower at school: they fail at verbal tasks which demand abstract thinking, such as reading, and with social and moral concepts.
- ✗ His reading scores trail behind the rest of his class.
- ✗ He has lessening interest in school, in teachers, or in learning.
- ✗ By now he and his friends have low educational and life expectations of themselves.
- ✗ These low expectations are reinforced by teachers and family.
- ✗ Poor supervision at home continues.
- ✗ His father, or a father substitute, is still absent.

Step Three: The emergence of the gang.

- ✗ At age 11 he is well into his bad ways.
- ✗ By age 15 he will engage in criminal behavior.
- ✗ His companions are increasingly important to him for personal identity and a sense of belonging.
- ✗ Life with his delinquent friends is hidden from parents and other adults.
- ✗ The earlier he commits his first delinquent act, the longer he will lead a life of crime.
- ✗ The number of delinquent acts increases in the year before he and his friends drop out of school.
- ✗ The girls he knows are on the same track as himself and have much the same experiences at home and school.
- ✗ His delinquent girlfriends have always had very bad relations with their mothers, as well as with normal girls in elementary school.
- ✗ These girls are very, very close with the girls in their own delinquent peer group.
- ✗ Many, but not all, in the group use drugs.

✗ Many, especially the girls, will run away from home; many others just drift away.

Step Four: Serious crime begins.

✗ High violence grows in his community with the growth of single parents.

✗ He purchases a gun, at first mainly for defense.

✗ Increasingly his group uses violence for exploitation.

✗ The violent young men in the group get arrested more than the nonviolent criminals.

✗ Most of them do not get caught at all.

✗ Gradually, different friends specialize in different types of crime: violence or theft.

✗ Some are more versatile than others.

✗ For any particular crime there is little chance of arrest.

✗ The girls become involved in prostitution while he and his group join criminal gangs.

Step Five: A new child, and a new generation of criminals begins.

✗ His 16-year-old girlfriend is pregnant. He has no thought of marrying her: it is not done. They will stay together for a while until the shouting and hitting start. He leaves her and does not see the baby.

✗ One or two of his criminal friends are real experts in their fields.

✗ In his neighborhood 4 percent of the delinquent families commit 50 percent of the crime.

✗ In any three-year period only 14 percent of the expert career criminals get caught. They commit hundreds of serious crimes per year.

✗ Most of the crime he and his friends commit is in his own neighborhood, which grows less and less viable as a community.

As Kevin N. Wright, professor of criminal justice at the State University of New York at Binghamton, states toward the end of his survey of the professional literature for the Department of Justice: *"The presence of any one of these family [and community] circumstances increases the chances of raising a delinquent child. The addition of more than one factor further enhances the odds of misbehavior. This notion of cumulative effect has been supported by reviews of several authors."* It is this distillation, from a wide base of neglected children, that gradually produces a more intense concentration of criminals: the 5 percent who commit 50 percent of the crime.

Bolstering the Smith-Jarjoura study, University of Illinois sociologist Robert J. Sampson, in a study on the differential effects of poverty and family disruption on crime, states:

> Overall the analysis shows that rates of black violent offending, especially by juveniles, are strongly influenced by variations in family structure. Independent of the major candidates supplied by prior criminological theory (e.g. income, region, size, density, age and race composition) black family disruption has the largest effects on black juvenile robbery and homicide.... The effects of family structure are strong and cannot be easily dismissed by reference to other structural and cultural features of urban environments.... The effect of family disruption on black violence is not due to the effect of black violence on family structure.

Sampson adds: "the predictors of white robbery are in large part identical in sign and magnitude to those for blacks."[10]

10 Robert J. Sampson, "Urban Black Violence: The Effect of Male Joblessness and Family Disruption," *American Journal of*

How Criminal Behavior Develops

Propensity to crime develops in stages associated with major psychological and sociological factors. The factors are not caused by race or poverty, and the stages are the normal tasks of growing up that every child confronts as he gets older. In the case of future violent criminals these tasks, in the absence of the love, affection, and dedication of both his parents, become perverse exercises, frustrating his needs and stunting his ability to belong.

The stages are:

Early infancy and the development of the capacity for empathy.

Early family life and the development of relationships based on agreements being kept and a sense of an intimate place where he belongs.

Early school life and the development of peer relationships based on cooperation and agreements conveying a sense of a community to which he belongs.

Mid-childhood and the experience of a growing capacity to learn and cooperate within his community.

Adolescence and the need to belong as an adult and to perform.

Generativity, or the begetting of the next generation through intimate sexual union and bringing others into the family and the community.

In all of these stages the lack of dedication and the atmosphere of rejection or conflict within the family diminish the child's experience of his personal life as one of love, dedication, and a place to belong. Instead, it is characterized increasingly by rejection, abandonment, conflict, isolation, and even abuse. He is compelled to seek a place to belong outside of such a home and, most frequently not finding it in the ordinary community, finds it among others who have experienced similar rejection. He becomes attached to those who are alienated, for, like him, they have been rejected. Not finding acceptance and nurturance from caring adults, they begin conveying their own form of acceptance.

Stage One: The Broken Family

The evidence of the professional literature is overwhelming: teenage criminal behavior has its roots in habitual deprivation of parental love and affection going back to early infancy. Future delinquents invariably have a chaotic, disintegrating family life. This frequently leads to aggression and hostility toward others outside the family. Most delinquents are not withdrawn or depressed. Quite the opposite: they are actively involved in their neighborhood, but often in a violent fashion. This hostility is established in the first few years of life. By age six, habits of aggression and free-floating anger typically are already formed.[11] By way of contrast, normal children enjoy a sense of personal security

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Sociology, Vol. 93 (1987), pp. 348-382.

11 Jennifer L. White *et al.*, "How Nearly Can We Tell?: Predictors of Childhood Conduct Disorder and Adolescent

derived from their natural attachment to their mother. The future criminal is often denied that natural attachment.

The relationship between parents, not just the relationship between mother and child, has a powerful effect on very young children. Children react to quarreling parents by disobeying, crying, hitting other children, and in general being much more antisocial than their peers.[12] And, significantly, quarreling or abusive parents do not generally vent their anger equally on all their children. Such parents tend to vent their anger on their more difficult children. This parental hostility and physical and emotional abuse of the child shapes the future delinquent.

Most delinquents are children who have been abandoned by their fathers. They are often deprived also of the love and affection they need from their mother. Inconsistent parenting,[13] family turmoil,[14] and multiple other stresses (such as economic hardship and psychiatric illnesses)[15] that flow from these disagreements compound the rejection of these children by these parents,[16] many of whom became criminals during childhood.[17] With all these factors working against the child's normal development, by age five the future criminal already will tend to be aggressive, hostile, and hyperactive. Four-fifths of children destined to be criminals will be "antisocial" by 11 years of age, and fully two-thirds of antisocial five-year-olds will be delinquent by age 15.[18]

Summing up the findings of the professional literature on juvenile delinquency, Kevin Wright, professor of criminal justice at the State University of New York at Binghamton, writes: "Research confirms that children raised in supportive, affectionate, and accepting homes are less likely to become deviant. Children rejected by parents are among the most likely to become delinquent."[19]

Delinquency," *Criminology*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (1990), pp. 507-533.

12 E.M. Cummings, "Coping with background anger in early childhood," *Child Development*, Vol. 58 (1987), pp. 976-984; Rolf Loeber, "Development and Risk Factors of Juvenile Antisocial Behavior and Delinquency," *Clinical Psychology Review*, Vol. 10 (1990), pp. 1-41.

13 Ronald L. Simons and Joan F. Robertson, "The Impact of Parenting Factors, Deviant Peers, and Coping Style Upon Adolescent Drug Use," *Family Relations*, Vol. 38 (1989), pp. 273-281, citing original work by Gerald R.Patterson (1982, 1986).

14 Lisabeth DiLalla *et al.*, "Aggression and Delinquency: Family and Environmental Factors," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1988), pp. 233-246.

15 Loeber, "Development and Risk Factors of Juvenile Antisocial Behavior and Delinquency."

16 Simons and Robertson, "The Impact of Parenting Factors, Deviant Peers, and Coping Style Upon Adolescent Drug Use."

17 James D. Roff, "Identification of Boys at High Risk for Delinquency," *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 58 (1986), pp. 615-618.

18 White *et al.*, "How Nearly Can We Tell?"

19 Kevin N. Wright and Karen E. Wright, "Family Life and Delinquency and Crime: A Policymaker's Guide to the Literature," prepared under interagency agreement between the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Bureau of Justice Assistance of the U.S. Department of Justice, 1992.

Family Condition Leading to Crime #1: Fatherless Families

According to the professional literature, the absence of the father is the single most important cause of poverty.[20] The same is true for crime. According to Kevin and Karen Wright,

> Research into the idea that single-parent homes may produce more delinquents dates back to the early 19th century....[O]fficials at New York State's Auburn Penitentiary, in an attempt to discern the causes of crime, studied the biographies of incarcerated men. Reports to the legislature in 1829 and 1830 suggested that family disintegration resulting from the death, desertion, or divorce of parents led to undisciplined children who eventually became criminals. Now well over a century later, researchers continue to examine the family background of unique populations and reach similar conclusions.[21]

The growth of the poverty-ridden family today is linked directly with the growth of the family headed by the always-single mother. And this modern form of family disintegration—or more accurately non-formation—has its consequences for criminal behavior. The growth in crime is paralleled by the growth in families abandoned by fathers.[22]

As the chart on the following page shows, the rate of juvenile crime within each state is closely linked to the percentage of children raised in single-parent families. States with a lower percentage of single-parent families, on average, will have lower rates of juvenile crime. State-by-state analysis indicates that, in general, a 10 percent increase in the number of children living in single-parent homes (including divorces) accompanies a 17 percent increase in juvenile crime.[23]

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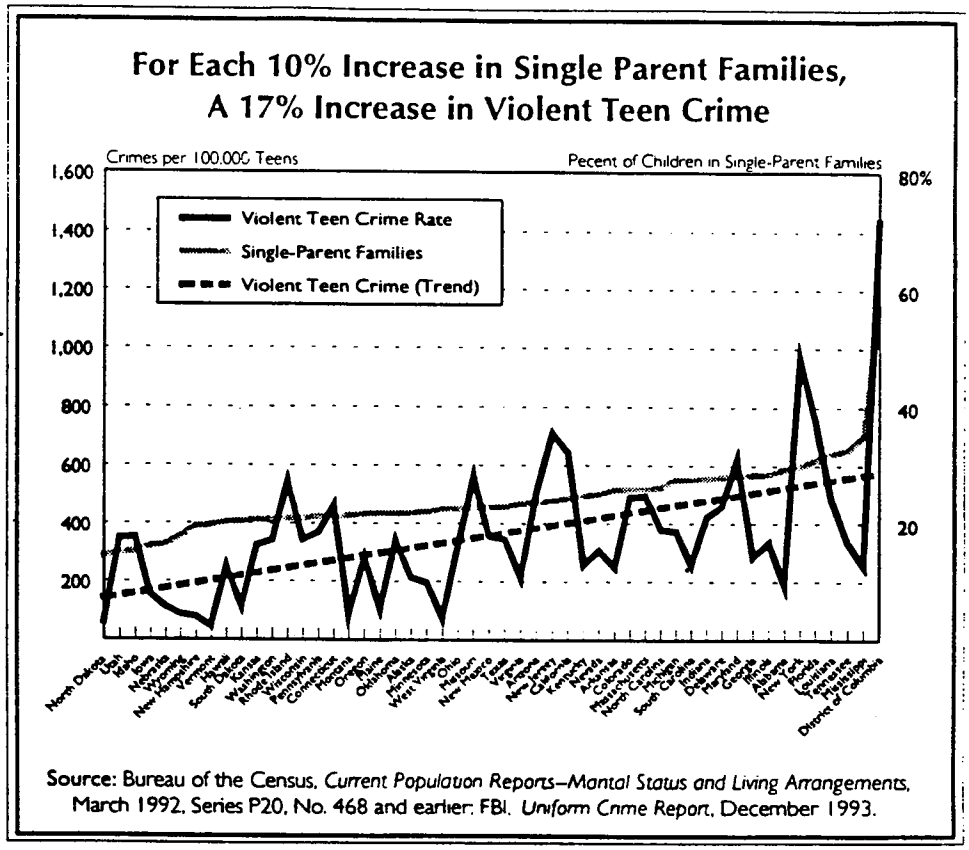
20 M. Anne Hill and June O'Neill, *Underclass Behaviors in the United States: Measurement and Analysis of Determinants* (New York: City University of New York, Baruch College, 1990).

21 Wright and Wright, "Family Life and Delinquency and Crime: A Policymaker's Guide to the Literature." See references to Ann Goetting, "Patterns of Homicide among Children," *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, Vol. 16 (1989), pp. 63-80, and Jill Leslie Rosenbaum, "Family Dysfunction and Female Delinquency," *Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1989), pp. 31-44.

22 Rolf Loeber, Magda Stouthamer-Loeber, Welmoet Van Kammen, and David P. Farrington, "Initiation, Escalation and Desistance in Juvenile Offending and Their Correlates," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Vol. 82 (1991), pp. 36-82. See also Wright and Wright, "Family Life and Delinquency and Crime: A Policymaker's Guide to the Literature," for a comprehensive listing of the following researchers who year by year in the last decade report similar conclusions: H. B. Gibson (1969); Michael Rutter (1971); Karen Wilkinson (1980); R.J. Canter (1982); Joseph H. Rankin (1983); Ross L. Matsueda and Karen Heimer (1987); and Larry LeFlore (1988).

23 Analysis of the fifty states and the District of Columbia shows a correlation of .69 between juvenile violent crime arrest rates and the percentage of children residing in single-parent homes within the state or District. Using statewide figures for the states and the District of Columbia, Heritage staff used multiple regression analysis to estimate the effect of family structure on juvenile crime, holding constant the degree of urbanization. The juvenile violent crime arrest rate served as the dependent variable. Two independent variables were used in the regression: the percentage of children residing in single-parent families and the percentage of the population within the state or District residing within standard metropolitan areas. These data indicate that a 10 percent increase in single-parent variable leads to a 17 percent increase in juvenile crime. Both the family structure variable and the urbanization variable were found to have a statistically significant effect on juvenile crime, with over a 99 percent level of significance. Detailed results are available from the author.

Along with the increased probability of family poverty and heightened risk of delinquency, a father's absence is associated with a host of other social problems. The three most prominent effects are lower intellectual development, higher levels of illegitimate parenting in the teenage years, and higher levels of welfare dependency.[24] According to a 1990 report from the Department of Justice, more often than not, missing and "throwaway" children come from single-parent families, families with step parents, and cohabiting-adult families.



Source: Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports–Marital Status and Living Arrangements*, March 1992, Series P20, No. 468 and earlier; FBI, *Uniform Crime Report*, December 1993.

Abandoned mothers. In normal families a father gives support to his wife, particularly during the period surrounding birth and in the early childhood years when children make heavy demands on her.[25] In popular parlance, he is her "burn-out" prevention. But a single mother does not have this support, and the added emotional and physical stress may result in fatigue and less parent availability to the child, increasing the risk of a relationship with the child that is emotionally more distant. The single mother generally is less able to attend to all of her child's needs as quickly or as fully as she could if she were well taken care of by a husband. These factors tend to affect the mother's emotional attachment to her child and in turn reduce the child's lifelong capacity for emotional attachment to others and empathy for others. Such empathy helps restrain a person from acting against others' well-being. Violent criminals obviously lack this. At the extreme, and a more common situation in America's inner cities, the distant relationship between a mother and child can become an abusing and neglectful relationship.[26] Under such conditions the child is at risk of becoming a psychopath.[27]

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24 For a more comprehensive overview of the professional literature on the relationship between illegitimacy and these negative social phenomena, see Fagan, "Rising Illegitimacy, America's Social Catastrophe."

25 Robert Karen, *Becoming Attached* (New York: Time Warner Books, 1994), chapter 14, "The Mother, the Father and the Outside World."

26 See U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Study of the national incidence of and prevalence of child abuse and

These observations have disturbing implications for society. If the conditions in which psychopathy is bred continue to increase, then America will have proportionately more psychopaths, and society is at an increased risk of suffering in unpredictable ways.

Abandoned sons. A father's attention to his son has enormous positive effects on a boy's emotional and social development.[28] But a boy abandoned by his father is deprived of a deep sense of personal security.[29] According to Rolf Loeber, Professor of Psychiatry, Psychology and Epidemiology at the Western Psychiatric Institute in the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, "A close and intense relationship between a boy and his father prevents hostility and inappropriate aggressiveness." This inappropriate aggressiveness is an early indication of potential delinquency later on, particularly in boys.[30] Furthermore, such bad behavior is a barrier to the child's finding a place among his more normal peers,[31] and aggressiveness usually is the precursor of a hostile and violent "street" attitude. Elijah Anderson, Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, observes that these young men, very sensitive in their demands for "respect," display a demeanor which communicates "deterrent aggression" not unlike the behavior that causes normal peers to reject and isolate aggressive boys in grade school.[32] The message of this body language, of course, triggers rejection by the normal adult community.

Absence of a Father's Authority and Discipline. The dominant role of fathers in preventing delinquency is well-established. Over forty years ago, this phenomenon was highlighted in the classic studies of the causes of delinquency by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck of Harvard University.[33] They described in academic terms what many children hear their mothers so often say: "Wait till your father gets home!" In a well-functioning family, the very presence of the father embodies authority, an authority conveyed through his daily involvement in family life.[34] This paternal authority is critical to the prevention of psychopathology and delinquency.[35]

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neglect," 1988, pp. 5-29.

27 Karen, *Becoming Attached*, chapter 4, "Psychopaths in the Making."

28 *Ibid.*, chapter 14, "The Mother, the Father and the Outside World."

29 Boys whose fathers die, leaving their mothers widowed, typically do not have this emotional deficit. See Paul L. Adams, Judith R. Milner, and Nancy A. Schrepf, *Fatherless Children* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1984). There is a difference between death and abandonment. One condition is a fact of life to be accepted by everybody; the other is a grave moral condition to be avoided if at all possible.

30 Loeber, "Development and Risk Factors of Juvenile Antisocial Behavior and Delinquency."

31 Patricia Van Voorhis *et al.*, "The Impact of Family Structure and Quality on Delinquency: A Comparative Assessment of Structural and Functional Factors," *Criminology*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1988), pp. 235-261.

32 Elijah Anderson, "The Code of the Street," *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1994. See also "Stage Two: Juvenile Delinquency," *infra.*

33 Sheldon and Eleanor T. Glueck, *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950).

34 Anne Campbell, "Self-Reported Delinquency and Home Life: Evidence from a Sample of British Girls," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1987). This is not to diminish the importance of the father's affiliation with his children in other areas—for example, sexual identity, to name but one.

35 Ellis Pitt-Atkins and Alice Thomas, *Loss of the Good Authority: The Cause of Delinquency* (London: Viking, 1989).

The benefits a child receives from his relationship with his father are notably different from those derived from his relationship with his mother. The father contributes a sense of paternal authority and discipline which is conveyed through his involved presence.[36] The additional benefits of his affection and attachment add to this primary benefit. Albert Bandura, professor of psychology at Stanford University, observed as early as 1959 that delinquents suffer from an absence of the father's affection.[37]

Family Condition Leading to Crime #2: The Absence of a Mother's Love

According to Professor Rolf Loeber of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine: "There is increasing evidence for an important critical period that occurs early in children's lives. At that time, youngsters' attachment to adult caretakers is formed. This helps them to learn prosocial skills and to unlearn any aggressive or acting out behaviors."[38]

The early experience of intense maternal affection is the basis for the development of a conscience and moral empathy with others.[39]

If a child's emotional attachment to his mother is disrupted during the first few years, permanent harm can be done to his capacity for emotional attachment to others. He will be less able to trust others and throughout his life will stay more distant emotionally from others. Having many different caretakers during the first few years can lead to a loss of this sense of attachment for life and to antisocial behavior.[40] Separation from

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36 "Involved presence" means active participation by the father in supervising the child's progress: at a minimum, by monitoring and correcting the child.

37 Albert Bandura and R. H. Walters, *Adolescent Aggression* (New York: Ronald Press, 1959).

38 Loeber, "Development and Risk Factors of Juvenile Antisocial Behavior and Delinquency."

39 Jay Belsky "The Effects of Infant Day Care Reconsidered," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, Vol. 3 (1988), pp. 235-272. On the vital connection between family and moral capacity, Wright and Wright, "Family Life and Delinquency and Crime," summarizes the findings of the professional literature as follows:

"Ainsworth suggested that children seek and accept the parent's guidance, further maintaining that secure children obey voluntarily from their own desires rather than from fear of reprisal."

"Arbuthnot et al. in an attempt to understand moral development and family relationships, suggested that dysfunctional families experiencing high levels of conflict, dominance, hostility, lack of warmth, and authoritarian disciplinary styles do not allow children to gain insight and understanding into how their misbehavior might cause hurt to others. Under these negative family conditions, children cannot develop conventional moral reasoning with roots in acceptance of mutual expectations, positive social intentions, belief in and maintenance of the social system and acceptance of motives which include duties and respect. Based on their review of the literature, Arbuthnot concluded that nearly all studies utilizing moral assessment devices with acceptable psychometric properties have shown that delinquents tend to have lower moral reasoning maturity than non-delinquents."

"They argue that delinquency can be anticipated when children or adolescents are unable to see the perspective of others and lack empathy for other people's circumstances. When conformity to rules of behavior for the sake of order in society is not accepted, when property is valued only in its possession, when personal relationships, even life itself are valued only for their utility, then delinquency behavior should not be a surprise. Moral or normative development at a more advanced level may be necessary for young people to move beyond utility to moral justification for correct behavior. The young persons must develop a sense of moral justification to have the ability and commitment to act accordingly when faced with temptation, economic deprivation or intense peer group pressure."

40 R.J. Cadoret and C. Cain, "Sex Differences in Predictors of Antisocial Behavior in Adoptees," *Archives of General Psychiatry*, Vol. 37 (1980), pp. 1171-1175.

the mother, especially between six months and three years of age, can lead to long lasting negative effects on behavior and emotional development. Severe maternal deprivation is a critical ingredient of juvenile delinquency: As John Bowlby, the father of attachment research, puts it, "Theft, like rheumatic fever, is a disease of childhood, and, as in rheumatic fever, attacks in later life are frequently in the nature of recurrences."[41] A child's emotional attachment to his mother is powerful in other ways. For example, even after a period of juvenile delinquency, a young man's ability to become emotionally attached to his wife can make it possible for him to turn away from crime.[42] This capacity is rooted in the very early attachment to his mother. We also know that a weak marital attachment resulting in separation or divorce accompanies a continuing life of crime.[43]

Many family conditions can weaken a mother's attachment to her young child. Perhaps the mother herself is an emotionally unattached person.[44] The mother could be so lacking in family and emotional support that she cannot fill the emotional needs of the child. She could return to work, or be forced to return to work, too soon after the birth of her child. Or, while she is at work, there could be a change in the personnel responsible for the child's day care. The more prevalent these conditions, the less likely a child will be securely attached to his mother and the more likely he will be hostile and aggressive.[45]

The mother's relationship with her children during this early period is also relevant to the debate over child care. According to Professor James Q. Wilson of the University of California at Los Angeles, the extended absence of a working mother from her child during the early critical stages of the child's emotional development increases the risk of delinquency.[46] Specifically, say Stephen Cernkovich and Peggy Giordano, "maternal employment affects behavior indirectly, through such factors as lack of supervision, loss of direct control, and attenuation of close relationships."[47] Thus, forcing a young single mother to return to work too soon after the birth of her baby is bad public policy. Unfortunately, the Clinton Administration's welfare reform bill would do just that.[48]

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41 See Karen, *Becoming Attached*, Chapter 4, "Psychopaths in the Making."

42 Robert J. Sampson and John L. Laub, "Crime and Deviance Over the Life Course: The Salience of Adult Social Bonds," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 5 (1990), pp. 609-627.

43 David P. Farrington, "Later Adult Life Outcomes of Offenders and Nonoffenders," in *Children at Risk: Assessment, Longitudinal Research and Intervention*, ed. Michael Brambring *et al.* (New York: Walter deGruyter, 1989), pp. 220-244, cited in Wright and Wright, "Family Life and Delinquency and Crime: A Policymaker's Guide to the Literature."

44 Karen, *Becoming Attached*. The research for the following statements is reviewed in this book, which is the most comprehensive and interestingly written overview of the attachment literature to date.

45 Le Grande Gardner and Donald J. Shoemaker, "Social Bonding and Delinquency: A Comparative Analysis," *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 30. No. 3 (1989), pp. 481-500.

46 James Q. Wilson, *Crime and Public Policy* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press, 1983), chapter 4, pp. 53-68.

47 Stephen A. Cernkovich and Peggy C. Giordano, "Family Relationships and Delinquency," *Criminology*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1987), pp. 295-321.

48 See Robert Rector, "How Clinton's Bill Extends Welfare As We Know It," Heritage Foundation *Issue Bulletin* No. 200, August 1, 1994, p. 8.

Family Condition Leading to Crime #3: Parental Fighting and Domestic Violence

The empirical evidence shows that, for a growing child, the happiest and most tranquil family situation is the intact primary marriage.[49] But even within intact two-parent families, serious parental conflict has bad effects. The famous studies of Harvard professors Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck in the 1950s found that one-third of delinquent boys in their sample came from homes with spouse abuse. The Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study observed that the incidence of delinquent behavior was higher in intact homes characterized by a high degree of conflict and neglect than it was in broken homes without conflict.[50] Dr. Travis Hirschi, professor of criminology at Arizona State University, in a study of junior and senior high school children in Northern California, replicated these findings a decade later. As these and other studies have shown, the lack of emotional attachment to parents is more strongly related to delinquency than is an intact home.[51] Professor Kevin N. Wright, in his review of the literature for the Department of Justice, lists 21 other major studies that clearly show the link between parental conflict and delinquency.[52] The lesson is clear: conflict between parents hurts the child. The more frequent or intense the conflict, the more the child is hurt emotionally. In sharp contrast, tranquillity and peace in the family and in the marriage help prevent delinquency.[53]

Family Breakup. Breakup of his parents' marriage during the first five years of his life places a child at high risk of becoming a juvenile delinquent.[54] This breakup—through either divorce or separation—is most likely to occur three to four years after marriage. Therefore, a large proportion of very young children experience the emotional pain of the early and final stages of marital dissolution at a time when they are most vulnerable to disruptions in their emotional attachment to their parents.[55]

Conflict within "step families" (families where at least one of the married parents is not the biological parent of all the children) also has serious effects. According to the California Youth Authority study of female delinquents, conducted by Jill Leslie Rosen-

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49 A primary marriage is one in which both husband and wife are in their first marriage.

50 Cited in Van Voorhis *et al.*, "The Impact of Family Structure and Quality on Delinquency: A Comparative Assessment of Structural and Functional Factors."

51 Travis Hirschi, *Causes of Delinquency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

52 Wright and Wright, "Family Life and Delinquency and Crime: A Policymaker's Guide to the Literature," p. 11.

53 There are a number of studies which show that the conflicted intact family is more criminogenic than non-conflicted other-family arrangements. These studies take the most conflicted primary marriage families and compare the results to the average single-parent family. This is a false comparison which implies that caring, intact marriage is not superior for children, but it nonetheless is a very useful contribution to understanding that conflict among parents makes for troubled children and that single-parent families and stepfamilies are quite capable of being conflict-free. They are, however, less likely to be so. The Van Voorhis study, from which these comparisons are taken, did not make this distinction. For public policy purposes, these studies serve to highlight the alienating function of conflict rather than love. It is obviously possible to have loving, nurturing relationships in always-single-parent families and in stepfamilies. Such is the case in the majority of these families. However, the risks of conflict are lowest in intact primary marriages with children.

54 Loeber, "Development and Risk Factors of Juvenile Antisocial Behavior and Delinquency"; Rolf Loeber and Magda Stouthamer-Loeber, "Family Factors as Correlates and Predictors of Juvenile Conduct Problems and Delinquency," in *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, ed. M. Tonry and N. Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), Vol. 7, pp. 29-149.

55 Farrington, "Later Adult Life Outcomes of Offenders and Nonoffenders."

baum, professor of criminology at California State University, "In the two parent families examined in this study a great deal of conflict was present. Of these parents, 71 percent fought regularly about the children. Since there were often 'his', 'hers' and 'theirs' present, the sources of conflict tended to result from one set of children having a bad influence on the others, the type of punishment invoked, or one particular child receiving too much attention."

Rates of conflict are much higher outside intact marriage families.[57] Not surprisingly, the rates of emotional and behavioral problems of children are more than double in step families.[58] Given their impact on children, the marriage arrangements of parents have significant effects on the incidence of teenage crime.

Family Condition Leading to Crime #4: The Lack of Parental Supervision and Discipline

The absence of parental supervision and discipline often is due simply to a lack of parenting skill, particularly if the parents were not supervised properly by their own parents. Summarizing the findings of the Oregon Group, a team of social science researchers under the leadership of Gerald R. Patterson of the Oregon Social Learning Center, James Q. Wilson of UCLA writes:

> [I]n order for the parent to teach the child not to use force or fraud, the parent must
>
> ❶ **monitor** the child's behavior;
>
> ❷ **recognize** deviant behavior when it occurs; and
>
> ❸ **punish** such behavior.
>
> All that is required to activate the system is affection for or investment in the child. The parent who cares for the child will watch his behavior, see him doing things he should not do, and correct him. Presto, a decent, socialized human being.[59]

Summarizing the Oregon Group's work on parental skills, Professor Kevin Wright advises: "Notice what the child is doing, monitor it over long periods of time, model social skill behavior, clearly state house rules, consistently provide some punishments for transgressions, provide reinforcement for conformity, and negotiate disagreement so the conflicts and crises do not escalate. Monitoring children involves awareness of their companions, whereabouts, and free-time activities. It also includes appropriate communication, accountability of the child to the parents and the amount of time spent with parents."[60] A host of other studies confirm that good supervision is at least as powerful

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56 Rosenbaum, "Family Dysfunction and Female Delinquency."

57 Carolyn Wolf Harlow, "Female Victims of Violent Crime" (Washington: U.S. Department of Justice, 1991).

58 Nicholas Zill and Charlotte A. Schoenborn, "Developmental, Learning and Emotional Problems: Health of Our Nation's Children, United States, 1988," in *Advance Data from the Vital and Health Statistics of the National Center for Health Statistics*, No. 190, November 1990.

59 Wilson, *Crime and Public Policy*, chapter 4, pp. 53-68.

60 Wright and Wright, "Family Life and Delinquency and Crime: A Policymaker's Guide to the Literature," p. 21.

as parental emotional attachment to the child and other forms of indirect control.[61] Monitoring fills the child's need for parental attention, moral education, and correction.

The children of single teenage mothers are more at risk for later criminal behavior. One reason is that teenage single mothers monitor their children less than older married mothers do.[62] They are more inclined to have an inconsistent, explosively angry approach to disciplining their children. In such homes family members, including children, generally use aggressive, coercive methods to make sure their needs are met by others in the family.[63] The parent's inability to monitor a child's behavior compounds the hostility between parent and child and leads to the first of the two major stages in delinquency described by the Oregon Group:

> [The first stage is a] breakdown in family management procedures, producing an increase in antisocial behavior and an impairment in social skills and application at school. [In] the second stage, during adolescence, these conditions continue and the disruptions in the parents' monitoring practices and the adolescent's own poor social skills place him further at risk for finding his community in a deviant peer group.[64]

While parental monitoring and supervision obviously are good for children, harsh or excessive discipline has just the opposite effect. The parents of delinquents are harsher than ordinary parents in punishing their children;[65] and depressed, stressed, or hostile parents more likely will vent their anger on their more aggressive children.[66] In the case of the single teenage mother, the absence of the father increases the risk of harshness from the mother.[67] For these children, harsh punishment can mean parental rejection. "Punishment that is too strict, frequent or severe can lead to a greater probability of delinquency regardless of parental attachments. That is, a strong parent-child bond will not lessen the adverse impact of punishment that is too harsh."[68]

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61 L. Edward Wells and Joseph H. Rankin, "Direct Parental Controls and Delinquency," *Criminology*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1988), pp. 263-285; Joseph H. Rankin and L. Edward Wells, "The Effect of Parental Attachments and Direct Controls on Delinquency," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1990), pp. 140-165; D. J. West and D. P. Farrington, *The Delinquent Way of Life: Third Report of the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development* (New York: Crane Russak, 1977). Wright and Wright, "Family Life and Delinquency and Crime: A Policymaker's Guide to the Literature," p. 21, provides further references supporting the critical importance of this parental skill.

62 Merry Morash and Lila Rucker, "An Exploratory Study of the Connection of Mother's Age at Childbearing to Her Children's Delinquency in Four Data Sets," *Crime & Delinquency*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1989), pp. 45-93.

63 Patterson (1982, 1986), quoted in Loeber, "Development and Risk Factors of Juvenile Antisocial Behavior and Delinquency."

64 Gerald R. Patterson and Thomas J. Dishion, "Contributions of Families and Peers to Delinquency," *Criminology*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1985), pp. 63-79.

65 Jeff M. Madoff, "The Attitudes of Mothers of Juvenile Delinquents Toward Child Rearing," *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, Vol. 23, No. 6 (1959), pp. 518-521.

66 Quoted in Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, "Family Factors as Correlates and Predictors of Juvenile Conduct Problems and Delinquency."

67 Morash and Rucker, "An Exploratory Study of the Connection of Mother's Age at Childbearing to Her Children's Delinquency in Four Data Sets."

68 Rankin and Wells, "The Effect of Parental Attachments and Direct Controls on Delinquency."

Family Condition Leading to Crime #5: Rejection of the Child

Jill Leslie Rosenbaum, professor of criminology at California State University, writes: "Research consistently has shown that those youth whose bond to their parents is weak are more likely to be delinquent. [Y]outh who are more attached to their parents have greater direct and indirect controls placed on their behavior."[69]

As a child's emotional attachment to his parents ensures a well-adjusted adult,[70] so parental rejection of the child has powerful opposite effects. Ronald Simons, professor of sociology at Iowa State University, summarizes the research findings: "Rejected children tend to distrust and attribute malevolent motives to others, with the result being a defensive, if not aggressive, approach to peer interactions....Such [rejecting] parents not only fail to model and reinforce prosocial behavior, they actually provide training in aggressive noncompliant behavior."[71]

Rejection by the family, which is the child's first and fundamental "community," sets the stage for another social tragedy. Rejected children tend gradually to drop out of normal community life. Professor Simons continues: "Parental rejection...increased the probability of a youth's involvement in a deviant peer group, reliance upon an avoidant coping style, and use of substances."[72] Many other studies in the professional literature replicate these findings.[73]

Family Condition Leading to Crime #6: Parental Abuse or Neglect

The professional literature is replete with findings of a connection between future delinquency and criminal behavior and the abuse and neglect visited upon children by their parents.[74] This abuse can be physical, emotional, or sexual.[75] "Overwhelmingly," observes Patricia Koski, "studies conducted since 1964 have found a positive correlation between parent-child aggression-violence-abuse-physical punishment and aggression on the part of the child."[76] Or, as summarized by Cathy Spatz Widom, professor of Criminal Justice and Psychology at Indiana University, Bloomington, "Violence begets violence."[77]

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69 Rosenbaum, "Family Dysfunction and Female Delinquency."

70 For a full and interesting development of this point, see Karen, *Becoming Attached.*

71 Simons and Robertson, "The Impact of Parenting Factors, Deviant Peers, and Coping Style Upon Adolescent Drug Use." See also Phyllis T. Howing, J. S. Wodarski, P. D. Kurtz, J. M. Gaudin, and E. Neligan Herbst, "Child Abuse and Delinquency: The Empirical and Theoretical Links," *Social Work*, May 1990, pp. 244-249, esp. p. 245.

72 Simons and Robertson, "The Impact of Parenting Factors, Deviant Peers, and Coping Style Upon Adolescent Drug Use."

73 See Ronald L. Simons *et al.*, "The Nature of the Association Between Parental Rejection and Delinquent Behavior," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1989), pp. 297-310.

74 Jeffrey Fagan and Sandra Wexler, "Family Origins of Violent Delinquents," *Criminology*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (1987), pp. 643-669. For a more detailed overview of the delinquency-abuse literature, see Howing *et al.*, "Child Abuse and Delinquency: The Empirical and Theoretical Links."

75 For a deeper insight into the different effects, see Ann Burgess *et al.*, "Abused to Abuser: Antecedents of Socially Deviant Behaviors," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 144 (1987), pp. 1431-1436, and S. E. Brown, "Social Class, Child Maltreatment, and Delinquent Behavior," *Criminology*, Vol. 22 (1984), pp. 259-278.

76 Patricia R. Koski, "Family Violence and Nonfamily Deviance: Taking Stock of the Literature," *Marriage and Family Review*, Vol. 12 (1988), pp. 23-46, from Wright and Wright, "Family Life and Delinquency and Crime: A Policymaker's Guide to the Literature."

Studies of the official records of abused children and arrested offenders put this connection in the range of 14 percent to 26 percent.[78] But the connection triples to a range of 50 percent to 70 percent once researchers go beyond official reports of investigated cases of child abuse to reports of abuse by the delinquents themselves.[79]

Significantly, West Coast Crips and Bloods gang members almost without exception grew up in dangerous family environments.[80] Typically, they left home to escape the violence or drifted away because they were abandoned or neglected by their parents.[81] Consequently, these young men have developed a defensive world view characterized by a feeling of vulnerability and a need to protect oneself, a belief that no one can be trusted, a need to maintain social distance, a willingness to use violence and intimidation to repel others, an attraction to similarly defensive people, and an expectation that no one will come to their aid.[82] Young women delinquents who run away from home are also frequently victims of sexual abuse.[83]

The close connection between child abuse and violent crime is highlighted also in a 1988 study of the 14 juveniles then condemned to death in the United States: 12 had been brutally abused, and 5 had been sodomized by relatives.[84]

Child sexual or physical abuse alone can outweigh many other factors in contributing to violent crime but affects boys and girls differently. Abuse visited upon girls is more likely to result in depression (the inversion of anger)[85] or psychiatric hospitalization than in the more outwardly directed hostility of abused males. According to Cathy Spatz Widom, "Early childhood victimization has demonstrable long-term conse-

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77 Cathy Spatz Widom, "Does Violence Beget Violence?" *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 106 (1989), pp. 3-28.

78 D. O. Lewis, S.S. Shanok, J.H. Pincusand, and G.H. Glaser, "Violent Juvenile Delinquents: Psychiatric, Neurological, Psychological and Abuse Factors," *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, Vol. 18 (1979), pp. 307-319; Peter C. Kratcoski, "Child Abuse and Violence Against the Family,"*Child Welfare*, Vol. 61 (1982), pp. 435-443; F.G. Bolton, J.W. Reich, and S.E. Guiterres, "Delinquency Patterns in Maltreated Children and Siblings," *Victimology*, Vol. 2 (1977), pp. 349-357.

79 C. M. Mouzakitis, "An Inquiry into Child Abuse and Juvenile Delinquency," in *Exploring the Relationship Between Child Abuse and Delinquency*, ed. R. J. Hunner and Y. E. Walker (Montclair, N.J.: Allanheld, Osmun, 1981), pp. 220-231; P. W. Rhoades and S. L. Parker, *The Connections Between Youth Problems and Violence in the Home* (Portland: Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, 1981).

80 Marc Fleisher, *Sentenced to Life*, forthcoming.

81 An extract from a July 31, 1994, CBS "60 Minutes" interview with Cody Scott, convicted criminal leader of the Los Angeles Crips, confirms the import of the research: "My mother couldn't protect me...and Dick [his father] couldn't—he never came....I hate him. Because I think about where I could have been, you know. And I can't dig that, man, the running out on your kids, you know. The father thing, man....That's just heavy...because I wouldn't have had to go to the street to find the street people."

82 Fleisher, *Sentenced to Life.*

83 Magnus J. Seng, "Child Abuse and Prostitution: A Comparative Analysis," *Adolescence*, Vol. 24 (1989), pp. 665-675; K. B. Morrow and G. T. Sorell, "Factors Affecting Self Esteem, Depression, and Negative Behaviors in Sexually Abused Female Adolescents," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 51 (1989), pp. 677-686.

84 D. O. Lewis, J. H. Pincus, B. Bard, E. Richardson, L. S. Prichep, M. Feldman and C. Yager, "Neuropsychiatric, Psychoeducational and Family Characteristics of 14 Juveniles Condemned to Death in the United States," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 145 (1988), pp. 585-589.

85 In depression the person, afraid of the outside, buries his anger deep inside, beyond his ability to recognize it. Neither he nor the outside world sees the anger. They see the depression.

quences for delinquency, adult criminality, and violent behavior....The experience of child abuse and neglect has a substantial impact even on individuals with otherwise little likelihood of engaging in officially recorded criminal behavior."[86]

Family Condition Leading to Crime #7: Criminal Parents

Patterns of crime are transmitted from generation to generation.[87]

In a longitudinal study of 394 families in England, David P. Farrington, professor of criminology at Cambridge University, found that approximately 4 percent of these families accrued almost half of the convictions of the entire sample.[88] "The fact that delinquency is transmitted from one generation to the next is indisputable....[F]ewer than 5 percent of the families accounted for almost half of the criminal convictions in the entire sample....In order to achieve such concentration of crime in a small number of families, it is necessary that the parents and the brothers and sisters of offenders also be unusually likely to commit criminal acts."

The findings for England, though dramatic and for a different culture and country, comport with the earlier U.S. research as summarized by Professor Kevin Wright of the State University of New York at Binghamton:

> The Gluecks determined that delinquents were more likely than nondelinquents to have delinquent fathers and mothers. Subsequent studies supported the Gluecks' findings, observing that delinquent boys were more likely to have delinquent or criminal parents. In a study of the families of black delinquents in St. Louis, Robins found that a child's delinquent behavior was associated with 1) arrests of one or both of the parents in their adult years, and 2) a history of juvenile delinquency on the part of the parents. Children with two parents with criminal histories were at extremely high risk of delinquency.[89]

Girls involved in crime tend to mate with (if not marry) men with criminal records.[90] Jill Leslie Rosenbaum of California State University, describing young delinquent women in her study, states: "[T]he men in the wards' lives bore a striking resemblance to the men chosen by their mothers. Many were significantly older than the girls and had criminal records."[91]

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86 Cathy Spatz Widom, "The Cycle of Violence," *Science*, Vol. 244 (1989), pp. 160-166.

87 "The fact that delinquency is transmitted from one generation to another is indisputable"; West and Farrington, *The Delinquent Way of Life: Third Report of the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development*, p. 109.

88 *Ibid.*, quoted in Cindy L. Hanson, S. W. Henggeler, W. F. Haefele, and J. D. Rodic, "Demographic, Individual and Family Relationship Correlates of Serious and Repeated Crime Among Adolescents and Their Siblings," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 52 (1984), pp. 528-538.

89 Wright and Wright, "Family Life and Delinquency and Crime: A Policymaker's Guide to the Literature." See the original for more citations for the conclusions within the quotation.

90 D. J. West, *Delinquency: Its Roots, Careers and Prospects* (London: Heinmann, 1982).

91 Rosenbaum, "Family Dysfunction and Female Delinquency."

STAGE TWO: JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Community Experience Leading to Crime #1: A Child's Rejection by Other Children

For most normal children, going to school is their first serious step into the broader community. But for future delinquents, this first experience pushes them further down the spiral toward delinquency and crime. Because of their family experiences, these children already are aggressive and hostile.[92] Normal, emotionally attached children avoid them—in effect isolating and rejecting them. As a result, they seek compatible company elsewhere, in a group where they feel they belong.

As Ronald Simons, professor of sociology at Iowa State University, writes, "Ineffective parents produce aggressive first graders who are rejected by their peers and as a consequence must form friendships with other deviant youth."[93] Likewise, Gerald Patterson of the Oregon Social Learning Center says: "Poor social skills, characterized by aversive or coercive interaction styles, lead directly to rejection by normal peers."[94] Patterson, the leading expert in this area, also makes the point that peer rejection tends to be linked to ineffective parenting: "Specifically, early parent failures contribute to later skills deficits....Parent skills in solving family problems correlate significantly with measures of academic skill and peer relations."[95] In a study of 1,224 grade school boys, James D. Roff, professor of psychology at Eastern Michigan University, concludes that the boy at highest risk of becoming delinquent "was characterized by aggressive behavior in the context of peer rejection."[96]

Closed off from the community of their peers, future criminals search out companions who feel comfortable with them.[97] Not surprisingly, these companions are similarly aggressive-hostile children with whom they feel at ease and by whom they are accepted. The group thus reinforces its own aggressive-hostile ways and gradually rejects the conventional ways of normally attached children.[98] Continued disruption at home, parents' continued use of harsh discipline,[99] and the continued absence of a father all add to the growing hostility of these future delinquents. Association with delinquent

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92 Dan Olweus, "Stability of Aggressive Reaction Patterns in Males: A Review," *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 86 (1979), pp. 852-875; Rolf Loeber, "The Stability of Antisocial and Delinquent Child Behavior: A Review," *Child Development*, Vol. 53 (1982), pp. 1431-1446; L. R. Huesman, M. M. Lefkowitz, L. D. Eron, and Leopold O. Walder, "Stability of Aggression Over Time and Generations," *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 20 (1984), pp. 1120-1134.

93 Simons and Robertson, "The Impact of Parenting Factors, Deviant Peers, and Coping Style Upon Adolescent Drug Use."

94 John M. Gottman and John T. Parkhurst, "A Developmental Theory of Friendship and Acquaintanceship Processes," *Minnesota Symposium on Child Psychology*, 1978, cited in Patterson and Dishion, "Contributions of Families and Peers to Delinquency."

95 Patterson and Dishion, "Contributions of Families and Peers to Delinquency."

96 Roff, "Identification of Boys at High Risk for Delinquency." A three-step screening procedure identified, from a sample of 1,224 grade school boys, a subsample of 60 subjects at increased risk for delinquency. Peer status, childhood aggression, and predelinquent behaviors were used in a sequential set of predictive tables. Relative improvement over chance provided a measure of predictive efficiency.

97 The 1992 movie *Boyz 'n the Hood* dramatically illustrates this friendship group phenomenon.

98 Gardner and Shoemaker, "Social Bonding and Delinquency: A Comparative Analysis."

99 Patterson and Dishion, "Contributions of Families and Peers to Delinquency."

peers—almost all of whom come from similar family and parental backgrounds—is the next significant development on the path to habitual crime.[100]

Community Experience Leading to Crime #2: Failure at School

By the age of five or six, small children who are deprived of parental love and supervision have become hostile and aggressive and therefore have greater difficulty forming friendships with normal children. This hostility also undermines their school work and success. Professor David P. Farrington's Cambridge University study finds a high correlation between school adjustment problems and later delinquency: "Youths who dislike school and teachers, who do not get involved in school activities, and who are not committed to educational pursuits are more likely than others to engage in delinquent behavior."[101]

Future criminals tend not to have good verbal memory at school or the ability to grasp the meaning of concepts, including moral concepts. They generally fail to learn reading and computation skills, undermining their performance in the middle grades.[102] They often fail in the later grades and have no or low aspirations for school or work.[103] They begin to be truant and eventually drop out of school in their teens. Typically, before they drop out of school they already have begun a serious apprenticeship in crime by having far higher rates of delinquency than do those who graduate.[104]

Once again, all these problems are rooted in unfavorable family conditions. In a study on juvenile delinquency, Merry Morash, professor of criminology at Michigan State University, analyzed four large data sets: the British-funded Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development and the U.S. federally funded National Longitudinal Study of Youth, National Survey of Children, and Philadelphia Cohort study. Examining these four large studies of the development of children, particularly the connection between home, education, and crime, she concludes: "[The] mother's [young] age is related to delinquency primarily through its association with low hopes for education, negative school experiences, father absence, and limited monitoring of the child."[105]

Consider the bleak impact of these family conditions on the future of the education system and the next generation of students. In the mid-1980s, the Chancellor of the New York City school system was complaining: "We are in a situation now where 12,000 of the 60,000 kindergartners have mothers who are still in their teenage years, and where 40 percent of our students come from single parent households."[106] But

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100 *Ibid.*; Simons and Robertson, "The Impact of Parenting Factors, Deviant Peers, and Coping Style Upon Adolescent Drug Use." For more details, see the series of over 12 studies by Patterson and his colleagues since 1980 elucidating the dynamics and parameters of these behaviors and their consequences for the social development of the child.

101 Farrington, "Later Adult Life Outcomes of Offenders and Nonoffenders." See also Loeber, "Development and Risk Factors of Juvenile Antisocial Behavior and Delinquency."

102 Loeber, "Development and Risk Factors of Juvenile Antisocial Behavior an Delinquency."

103 Jeffrey Fagan and Edward Pabon, "Contributions of Delinquency and Substance Use to School Dropout Among Inner-City Youths," *Youth & Society*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1990), pp. 306-354.

104 *Ibid.*

105 Morash and Rucker, "An Exploratory Study of the Connection of Mother's Age at Childbearing to Her Children's Delinquency in Four Data Sets."

since then, the national teenage out-of-wedlock birth rate has grown by 50 percent, from 30 births per 1,000 unmarried teenage girls in 1982 to 45 per 1,000 in 1991.[107]

Community Experience Leading to Crime #3: The Growth of the Gang

Commenting on the work of all parents as their children enter adolescence, James Q. Wilson of UCLA writes:

> Affection and monitoring had better have done the job already, because the "child-rearing" days are over. It is time to hope for the best....[A] major feature of recent times is the increasing independence of adolescents from the family....This independence from the family results in increasing dependence of the adolescent on other adolescents. But adolescents cannot take the place of parents as socializing agents because they have little or no investment in the outcome, and are less likely to recognize deviant behavior.[108]

All children, especially during their teenage years, gravitate toward the influence of their peers.[109] Not surprisingly, as the professional literature shows, delinquent peers move a boy in the direction of delinquency and crime.[110] The same is true for girls.

In the company of their peers, future criminals gradually learn to exploit the people of their own community, a community to which they feel no responsibility or obligation.[111] For these boys, increasingly involved with delinquent companions, their lives tend to become insulated from the weakening influence of their families. Continued weakness in parental supervision, monitoring, and control invariably escalates the conflict at home, and this increasing conflict and related family problems cause these children to deepen their affiliation with delinquent groups, the only class of people likely to welcome them "with a place to belong to." While the children continue their aggressive, hostile, and violent ways, their behavior also increasingly repels normal, non-aggressive people. They grow more familiar and at ease with their delinquent peers.[112] Dropping out of school is a natural development.[113]

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106 Quoted in Fagan and Pabon, "Contributions of Delinquency and Substance Use to School Dropout Among Inner-City Youths."

107 Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Health Statistics, *Advance Report on Final Natality Statistics, 1991*, Monthly Vital Statistics Report, September 9, 1993, p. 31, Table 17.

108 Wilson, *Crime and Public Policy*, chapter 4, pp. 53-68.

109 Raymond Paternoster, "Examining Three Wave Deterrence Models: A Question of Temporal Order and Specification," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Vol. 79 (1988), pp. 135-179.

110 Gardner and Shoemaker, "Social Bonding and Delinquency: A Comparative Analysis"; Patterson and Dishion, "Contributions of Families and Peers to Delinquency"; Simons and Robertson, "The Impact of Parenting Factors, Deviant Peers, and Coping Style Upon Adolescent Drug Use"; Hanson *et al.*, "Demographic, Individual and Family Relationship Correlates of Serious and Repeated Crime Among Adolescents and Their Siblings"; R. L. Matsueda and Karen Heimer, "Race, Family Structure and Delinquency: A Test of Differential Association and Social Control Theories," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 52 (1988), pp. 826-840.

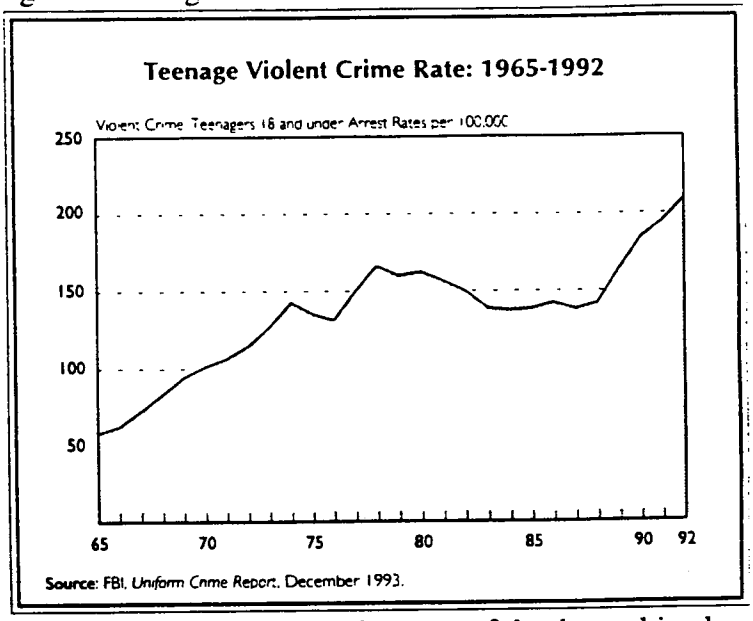
111 D. S. Elliott, D. Huizinga, and B. J. Morse, *The Dynamics of Deviant Behavior: A National Survey Progress Report* (Boulder Col.: Behavioral Research Institute, 1985).

112 Patterson and Dishion, "Contributions of Families and Peers to Delinquency"; DiLalla *et al.* "Aggression and Delinquency: Family and Environmental Factors"; Simons and Robertson, "The Impact of Parenting Factors, Deviant Peers, and Coping Style Upon Adolescent Drug Use."

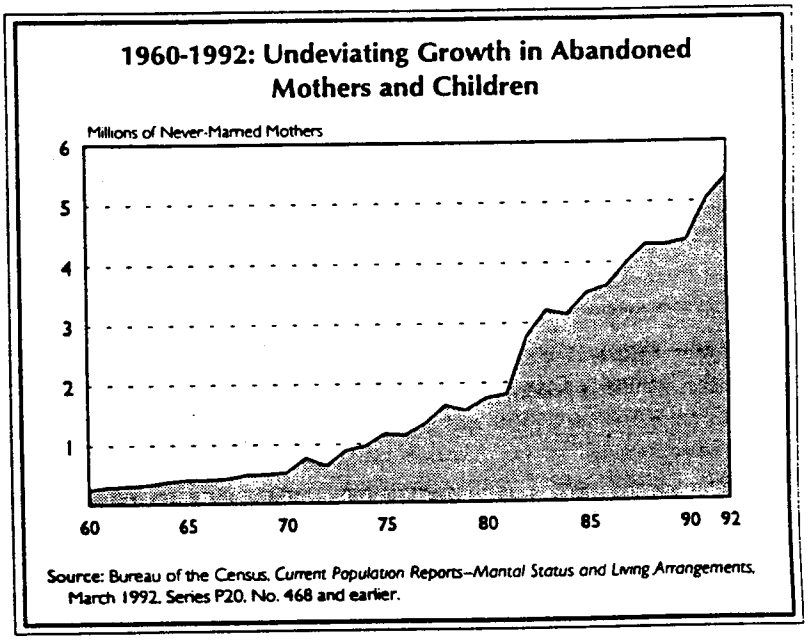
113 Fagan and Pabon, "Contributions of Delinquency and Substance Use to School Dropout Among Inner-City Youths."

STAGE THREE: THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNITY

Criminal youth tend to live in high-crime neighborhoods. Each reinforces the other in a destructive relationship, spiraling downward into violence and social chaos.



The 1980s witnessed an extraordinary increase in community violence in most major American cities. In 1990, homicide in Boston increased by over 40 percent over the previous year; in Denver, it rose by 29 percent; in Chicago, Dallas, and New Orleans, by more than 20 percent; in Los Angeles, by 16 percent; in New York, by 11 percent.[114] In 1988, nationwide firearm death rates for all teenagers for the first time exceeded the total for all other natural causes of death combined, and black male teens were 11 times more likely than their white counterparts to be killed by guns.[115]



According to the national survey data, there is a clear correlation between the surge in criminal violence in these largely urban communities and the collapse of marriage. Professional research in criminology also supports this conclusion.

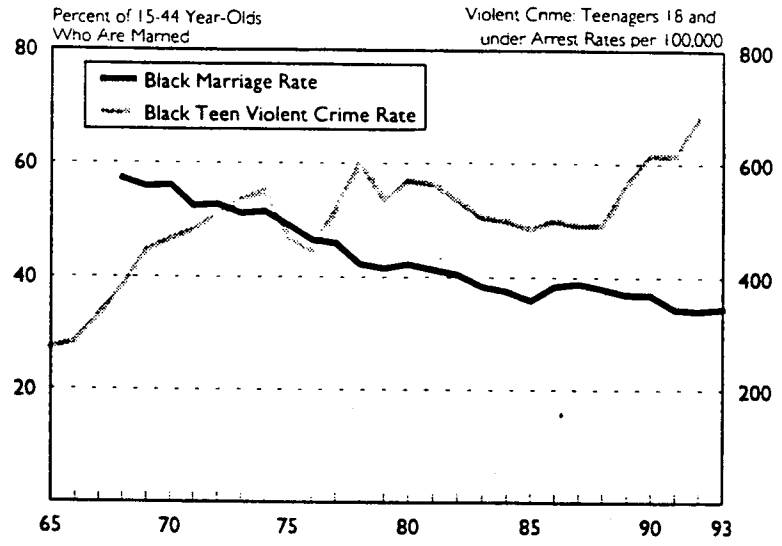
Tragically for these communities, single-parent neighborhoods tend to be high-crime neighborhoods. Researchers long ago observed that violent crime, among both teenagers and adults, is concentrated most heavily in urban neighborhoods characterized by a very high proportion of single-parent families.[116] More recent figures indicate the illegitimate birth

114 G. Escobar, "Washington Area's 703 Homicides in 1990 Set a Record," *The Washington Post*, January 2, 1991, p. A1.

115 K. K. Christofel, "Violent Death and Injury in U.S. Children and Adolescents," *American Journal of Disease Control*, Vol. 144 (1990), pp. 697-706; John E. Richters and Pedro E. Martinez, "The NIMH Community Violence Project: Children as Victims of and Witnesses to Violence," *Psychiatry*, Vol. 56 (1993), pp. 7-35.

rate in many urban neighborhoods is a staggering 80 percent.[117] And today's researchers, like those before them, find that a neighborhood composed mainly of single-parent families invariably is a chaotic, crime-ridden community[118] in which assaults are high[119] and the gang—"the delinquent subcommunity"—assumes control.[120] In these chaotic conditions, parental supervision of adolescent and pre-adolescent children is almost impossible.[121] In turn, children living in these neighborhoods are more likely to learn, accept, and use physical violence to satisfy their wants and needs.[122]

For Black Families: A Decrease in Marriage And an Increase in Teen Crime



Source: Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports–Marital Status and Living Arrangements*, March 1992, Series P20, No. 468 and earlier; FBI, *Uniform Crime Report*, December 1993.

While serious crime is highest in these socially disorganized, largely urban neighborhoods, however, its frequency is not a function of race. The determining factor is absence of marriage. Among broken families, with their chaotic, "dysfunctional" relationships, whether white or black, the crime rate is very high. Among married two-parent families, whether white or black, the crime rate is very low. The capacity and determination to maintain stable married relationships, not race, is the pivotal factor.[123] The chaotic, bro-

116 Shaw and McKay, *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1942), cited in Fagan and Wexler, "Family Origins of Violent Delinquents."

117 National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States 1990*, 1994, Vol. 1: Natality, pp. 194-236, Tables 185 and 186.

118 Douglas Smith and G. Roger Jarjoura, "Social Structure and Criminal Victimization," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 25, No.1 (February 1988), pp. 27-52; Hill and O'Neill, *Underclass Behaviors in the United States: Measurement and Analysis of Determinants*.

119 Robert B. Sylvies *et al.*, "Medical, Family, and Scholastic Conditions in Urban Delinquents," *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (May 1991), pp. 448-449.

120 Fagan and Wexler, "Family Origins of Violent Delinquents."

121 A. J. Reis, Jr., "Why Are Communties Important in Understanding Crime?" in *Communities and Crime* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986), pp. 1-33.

122 Elton Jackson, Charles Tittle, and M. J. Burke, "Offense-Specific Models of Differential Association," paper presented at annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, 1984, cited in Fagan and Wexler, "Family Origins of Violent Delinquents"; Rodney Stark, "Deviant Places: A Theory of the Ecology of Crime," *Criminology*, Vol. 25 (1987), pp. 893-909.

123 Sampson, "Urban Black Violence: The Effect of Male Joblessness and Family Disruption"; Fagan, "Rising Illegitimacy:

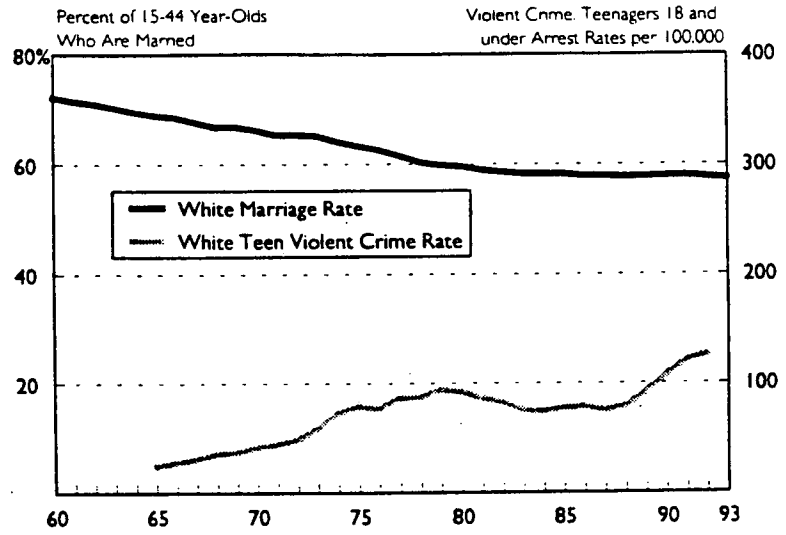
ken community stems from these chaotic, broken families. The reason race appears to be an important factor in crime is the wide differences in marriage rates among ethnic groups.

While the crime rate among blacks has risen sharply, so has the disappearance of marriage. The same holds true for whites.

A recent report from the state of Wisconsin further illustrates the same relationship.

A high concentration of broken families without husbands and fathers is the danger signal for future crime.

For White Families: A Decrease in Marriage And an Increase in Teen Crime



Source: Bureau of the Census. *Current Population Reports–Marital Status and Living Arrangements*. March 1992, Series P20, No. 468 and earlier; FBI. *Uniform Crime Report*, December 1993.

Violent families, violent youth, and violent communities. Violent youth often come from violent parents. Violent youth are the most likely to have witnessed conflict and violence between their parents.[124] They also are the most likely to commit serious violent crime and to become "versatile" criminals—those engaged in a variety of crimes, including, theft, fraud, and drugs.[125] Among these youths, physically or sexually abused boys commit the most violent offenses.[126]

Internal family violence is only one major contributor to adolescent violence in these socially disorganized neighborhoods. The neighborhood itself (which includes the youth's violent peers, also rooted in their own broken families) is the other powerful contributor,[127] especially to violent delinquency,[128] and its culture of aggression and vio-

America's Social Catastrophe"; Smith and Jarjoura, "Social Structure and Criminal Victimization."

124 Candace Kruttschmitt, Linda Heath, and David A. Ward, "Family Violence, Television View Habits and Other Adolescent Experiences Related to Violent Criminal Behavior," *Criminology*, Vol. 24 (1986), pp. 235-267.

125 Loeber, "Development and Risk Factors of Juvenile Antisocial Behavior and Delinquency."

126 Cathy Spatz Widom, "Child Abuse, Neglect, and Violent Criminal Behavior," *Criminology*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1989), pp. 251-271; Dorothy Lewis *et al.* "Toward a Theory of the Genesis of Violence: A Follow-up Study of Delinquents," *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (1989), pp. 431-436; Fagan and Wexler "Family Origins of Violent Delinquents"; DiLalla *et al.*, "Aggression and Delinquency: Family and Environmental Factors."

127 See "Stage Two, Community Experiences Leading to Crime #3: The Growth of the Gang," *supra*.

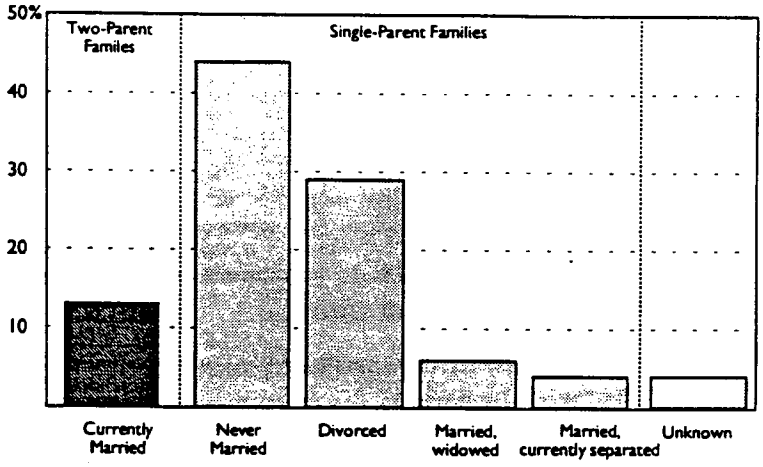
128 Elliott *et al.*, *The Dynamics of Deviant Behavior: A National Survey Progress Report*.

lence is imported into the school. Consider a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control:

> More than 4 per cent of high school students in Grades 9-12 had carried a firearm at least once in the past 30 days, and 35.5 percent of those had carried six or more times during that period. Thus, about 1.4 percent of high school students might be considered regular gun carriers. Furthermore, more than 60 percent of the students surveyed in Baltimore reported knowing someone who had carried a gun to school.[129]

Given the level of violence in their neighborhoods, for young people to carry guns for self-defense is perhaps understandable.[130] And the youth most likely to feel the need for defense is the member of a street gang in a violent neighborhood. After he has committed his first violent crime, the evidence shows that he is likely to commit further crimes and more than twice as likely as other criminal youths to commit more violence.[131] Various studies indicate that violent crime is much more likely to come to the attention of the police and lead to investigation and arrest.[132] For example, Franklyn W. Dunford and Delbert S. Elliott of the Behavioral Research Institute at Boulder, Colorado, find that young violent criminals are more likely than others to be arrested.[133]

Case Study in Wisconsin: Family Status of Juvenile Deliquents in State Custody



Source: Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Youth Services, *Family Status of Delinquents in Juvenile Correctional Facilities in Wisconsin*, April 1994, reported in *The Family in America*, Rockford Institute.

As a result of the low arrest rate for criminals, even the alarming official crime figures do not give policymakers a true picture of what is happening in high-crime communities.

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129 Alan J. Lizotte, James M Tesoriero, Terence P. Thornberry, and Marvin D. Krohn, "Patterns of Adolescent Firearms Ownership and Use," *Justice Quarterly*, Vol. 11 (1994), pp. 51-74.

130 *Ibid.*

131 Patricia Brennan, Sarnoff Mednick, and Richard John, "Specialization in Violence: Evidence of a Criminal Subgroup," *Criminology*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1989), pp. 437-453.

132 *Ibid.* This specialization in violence is noted in other countries also. The major longitudinal Danish research study, a birth cohort of 28,884, is reported in the Brennan study.

133 Franklyn W. Dunford and Delbert S. Elliot, "Identifying Career Offenders Using Self-Reported Data," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (February 1984), pp. 57-86. Dunford and Elliot also find that very few serious criminals are in fact arrested.

According to Dunford and Elliott, 93 percent of those committing between 100 and 200 offenses between 1976 and 1978 were not arrested, while 81 percent of the youth responsible for more than 200 offenses during the same two-year period were not arrested. Explains Dunford: "These data suggest that only those at the extreme have any risk of arrest, and even that risk is not high. It appears that the volume of crime committed by these youth may be such that arrest is a function of chance alone. The police may, figuratively, be stumbling over them. The likelihood of arrest is close to zero until one reports in excess of 100 total offenses."[134] Elsewhere in the same study, Dunford reports: "Of the 242 [career criminals] 86 percent had no record of arrest. In other words, the overwhelming majority of self-reported career offenders were never arrested during a three year period when they were involved in very frequent and serious criminal offenses."

Given the very high frequency of undetected crime by career (expert) criminals, the other dramatic finding from the Cambridge University study of British delinquents[135] may hold for the United States as well: that 50 percent of all crime probably comes from less than 5 percent of the delinquents' families.

The Family versus the "Hood." Two researchers from the National Institute of Mental Health, John E. Richters and Pedro Martinez, have studied families in high-risk inner-city neighborhoods.[136] Their study indicates that only 6 percent of children from stable, safe homes become delinquent. Meanwhile, 18 percent of children from homes rated as either unstable or unsafe (broken marriage or lack of supervision) became delinquent, but 90 percent of children from homes rated as *both* unstable and unsafe became delinquent. Only 10 percent did not.

Such studies show that the family is fighting desperately with the violent neighborhood for the future of its children. The good news is that even in violent and crime-ridden neighborhoods, "good families" are winning the battle, though a 6 percent juvenile delinquency failure rate is still a tragedy for them. Even the troubled family is winning, with its 82 percent success rate, though the one-in-five delinquency rate means that every second family has had a family member in jail. Remarkably, even 10 percent of children from the most unstable and unsafe families somehow survive and escape a life of crime.[137] The 90 percent delinquency rate among their siblings may be inevitable, for these are the families with the highest concentration of neglectful and abusive parents who would warp any child.[138]

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134 *Ibid.*

135 Farrington, "Later Adult Life Outcomes of Offenders and Nonoffenders."

136 John E. Richters and Pedro E. Martinez, "Violent Communities, Family Choices, and Children's Chances: An Algorithm for Improving the Odds," *Development and Psychopathology*, Vol. 5 (1993), pp. 609-627.

137 The work of Robert Woodson and his Washington, D.C.-based National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise focuses on the successes of people from these backgrounds and difficult situations who, by their own efforts and with a clear goal of what they want to achieve. go ahead and do so without reliance on government, from which they ask only that it remove its regulations and constraints.

138 Jackson, Tittle and Burke, "Offense-Specific Models of Differential Association."

Delinquent Girls

The discussion of delinquency generally focuses on boys because most violent crime is committed by males. But while male and female delinquents have similar experiences, the quality of the intimate family relations of delinquent females often is much worse. They tend to be even less attached to, and to have more problems with, their mothers than do male delinquents. They are even more firmly rejected by their female school peers than are their male counterparts. And, in turn, they are even more firmly attached to their own "bad companions"—the delinquent peer group—than are males to theirs.[139]

Professor Jill Rosenbaum of California State University paints a graphic picture of the early life of a female delinquent. The relationship between family breakdown or disintegration and later criminal status is dramatic:

> In 1980, records were requested on 240 women who had been committed to the California Youth Authority (CYA), the state agency for juvenile offenders. ...*Family Structure*: Very few (seven percent) of these girls came from intact homes families....By the time these girls were 16, their mothers had been married an average of four times, and there was an average of 4.3 children per family....*Family Criminality*: seventy six percent of the girls came from families where there was a record of criminality....*Family Violence*: Although much data on family violence are missing, it is evident that violence was present in many of these homes....*Family Conflict*: In the two parent families (mainly step families) examined in this study a great deal of conflict was present. Of these parents, 71 percent fought regularly about the children. Since there were often his, hers and theirs present, the sources of conflict tended to result from one set of children having a bad influence on the others, the type of punishment invoked, or one particular child receiving too much attention....Conflict over the use of alcohol was present in 81 percent of the homes....*Parent-Child Relationships*: A Poor relationship between parent and child is highly influential in the child's subsequent delinquency....Many of the girls received very little positive feedback from parents in the home. Of the fathers who were present, 53 percent were viewed by parole officers as rejecting of the girl, as were 47 percent of the mothers. Rejection came in many forms....The mothers appeared to be not only neglectful, but 96 percent were described as passive and 67 percent as irresponsible....*Generational Cycles*: The mothers of the CYA wards tend to marry young, with 44% having had the ward by the time she was 18. These daughters tended to follow in their mothers' footsteps and begin bearing children at an early age....Parents often encouraged this behavior. One mother explained to her daughter's parole officer that she was happy to hear that her 15-year-old daughter was pregnant—"That is what women are supposed to do."...The men in the wards' lives bore a striking resemblance to the men chosen by their mothers. Many were significantly older than the girls and had criminal records....*The Mothers*: The wards' mothers did not have the supports or resources needed to cope with their environments. They often were socially isolated and distrusted those attempting to help. They viewed

139 Fagan and Pabon, "Contributions of Delinquency and Substance Use to School Dropout Among Inner-City Youths."

> welfare workers as those trying to take away funds and social workers as trying to take away their children. These attitudes and fears began long before the wards were born perhaps even before their mothers were born. The mothers of the CYA girls did not know how to be mothers, for they were often children themselves when their children were born, and lacked the emotional resources to instill a sense of trust and security necessary for self esteem and growth. Over time, just trying to survive depleted whatever emotional resources they might once have had.[140]

THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF A SAFE SOCIETY

Most ordinary Americans do not need to survey the social science literature to know that a family life of affection, cohesion, and parental involvement prevents delinquency. In particular, they know almost instinctively that maternal affection, maternal self-confidence, and the father's esteem for the mother are among the critical elements in raising well-balanced children.[141] The literature bears out these common-sense assumptions.[142] Most Americans, too, know that in a law-abiding family the parents encourage the moral development of their children and promote an understanding and acceptance of traditional moral norms. Again, the professional literature reinforces these common-sense maxims. As Professor Wright observes:

> The existing literature on the topic [of normative development] includes a study by Mak[143] that found that a belief in law was negatively associated with several measures of delinquency for both boys and girls. Mak further reported that feelings of empathy are inversely related to seriousness, vandalism, and assault for girls and cheating and assault for boys. Agnew[144] found that a belief that it is good to be honest and to avoid cheating was associated with a reduced likelihood of delinquency. Smith and Paternoster[145] discovered that moral beliefs reduced the likelihood of marijuana use among both males and females. Paternoster and Triplett[146] observed that moral beliefs were related to both the incidence and prevalence of marijuana use, theft, and vandalism.

Moreover, most Americans know that this moral development of children usually is accomplished within the context of religious belief and practice. The government's own sur-

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140 Rosenbaum, "Family Dysfunction and Female Delinquency."

141 Joan McCord, "Instigations and Insulation: How Families Affect Antisocial Aggression," in *Development of Antisocial and Prosaic Behavior*, ed. J. Block, D. Olweus, and M. R. Yarrow (New York: Academic Press, 1986).

142 Wright and Wright, "Family Life and Delinquency and Crime: A Policymaker's Guide to the Literature," p. 15, cites thirteen major studies which explore the defining characteristics of the nondelinquent family.

143 Anita S. Mak, "Testing a Psychosocial Control Theory of Delinquency," *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, Vol. 17 (1990), pp. 215-230.

144 Robert Agnew, "Social Control Theory and Delinquency: A Longitudinal Test," *Criminology*, Vol. 23 (1985), pp. 43-61.

145 Douglas A. Smith and Raymond Paternoster, "The Gender Gap in Theories of Deviance; Issues and Evidence," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 24 (1987), pp. 140-172.

146 Raymond Paternoster and Ruth Tripplett, "Disaggregating Self-Reported Delinquency and Its Implications for Theory," *Criminology*, Vol. 26 (1988), pp. 591-647.

veys of the professional literature confirm this view. To continue from Professor Wright's review of the literature for the Justice Department:

> Another study[147] found that attachment to church was inversely related to violence. And, finally Tolan[148] found that the moral-religious emphasis within the family...was related to self-reported delinquency.
>
> Rodney Stark says that delinquency rises or falls in a high school to the extent to which the high schools contain a majority of religious students.[149] This fits with the findings that among black men incarcerated and those not is that those who do not commit crime participated in church activities and had friends who went to church. By contrast those who were incarcerated had deviant friends and did not go to church.[150]

The Crucial Elements

The root cause of violent crime thus is found in failed intimate relationships of love in marriage and in the family. The breakdown of stable communities into crime-infested neighborhoods flows directly from this failure. In contrast, addressing the root causes of crime requires an understanding of the crucial elements of supportive family and community life.

First in importance and influence is the basic marriage commitment. Its vital importance is starkly evident in the catastrophic impact of its absence.

Second is the relationship of love between parents and children, a love expressed primarily in supervision.

Third, stemming from the first and second, is the child's ability to relate to other children.

Fourth, the backbone of strong neighborhoods, is friendship and cooperation between families.

It is no coincidence that one of the central rules in the traditional moral codes of all communities at all times, in all places, and in all cultures is the prohibition against giving birth to children outside of marriage. Societies all over the world have recognized that this prohibition is essential to social stability and to raising members of each new generation with the proper respect for their community and their peers. Unfortunately, and with disastrous consequences, this prohibition is ignored today in American society at all levels, but most especially in central-city neighborhoods. Having a child outside of marriage

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147 Gardner and Shoemaker, "Social Bonding and Delinquency: A Comparative Analysis."

148 Patrick H. Tolan, "Socioeconomic, Family and Social Stress Correlates of Adolescent Antisocial and Delinquent Behavior," *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, Vol. 16 (1988), pp. 317-331; Patrick H. Tolan and Raymond P. Lorion, "Multivariate Approaches to the Identification of Delinquency Proneness in Adolescent Males," *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 16 (1988), pp. 547-561.

149 Rodney Stark, Daniel P. Doyle, and Lori Kent, "Rediscovering Moral Communities: Church Membership and Crime," in *Understanding Crime: Current Theory and Research*, ed. T. Hirschi and M. Goddfredson (Beverly Hills, Cal.: Sage, 1980), pp. 43-50.

150 Naida M. Parson and James K. Mikawa, "Incarceration and Nonincarceration of African-American Men Raised in Black Christian Churches," *Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 125 (1991), pp. 163-173.

virtually guarantees a teenage woman and her children a life of poverty, low education, low expectations, and low achievement. It gradually puts in place the conditions which foster rejection and, ultimately, crime.

Whenever there is too high a concentration of such broken families in any community, that community will disintegrate. Only so many dysfunctional families can be sustained before the moral and social fabric of the community itself breaks down. Re-establishment of the basic community code of children within marriage is necessary both for the future happiness of American families and for a reduction in violent crime.

It follows, then, that the real work of reducing violent crime is the work of rebuilding the family. Institutions in the community, such as the church and the school, have demonstrated their importance in helping to restore stability. Government agencies, on the other hand, are powerless to increase marital and parental love; they are powerless to increase or guarantee care and attention in a family; they are powerless to increase the ability of adults to make and keep commitments and agreements. Instead, thanks to policies that do little to preserve the traditional family and much to undermine it, government continues to misdiagnose the root cause of social collapse as an absence of goods and services. This misdiagnosis is government's own contribution to the growth of crime. Having misdiagnosed, it misleads.

There is an irreplaceable role for political leadership in the current crisis.[151] It is not to take the place of family and community, however, but to articulate a compelling, positive vision of the nation in terms of family and community life. As President John F. Kennedy inspired thousands of young people to serve others overseas, another must inspire today's youth to rebuild America's families and community. This is the work not of government, but of the nation's primary nurturing institutions: family, church, and school. The missions of these institutions are missions of love and the moral and the spiritual formation of a people.

The alternative is continued social disintegration.

WHAT GOVERNMENT CAN DO

❶ Hold hearings on the real causes of crime.

Given the disconnect between the assumptions behind the social spending in the Omnibus Crime Bill of 1994 and the real root causes of crime, a major correction in thinking is needed. The Judiciary Committees of Congress should conduct a series of hearings on the root causes—the long-term causes—of crime. These should focus on the relationship of family structure, and particularly of marriage and religious practice, to the prevention of violent crime. The literature, the scholarship, and particularly the experience are wide and deep.

151 The author is indebted to Jerry Campbell, Ph.D., of the Impact Group, Alexandria, Virginia, for many of the ideas on political leadership in this paper, as well as much of its conceptual overview of the relationship between family and community and between adult capacity and the earlier love and dedication shown by the adults of the community to the young in their charge.

❷ **Conduct a serious review of all national social programs.**

Congress ought to conduct a comprehensive review of all national social programs, inviting the director of each program to present the evaluation data on the program's effectiveness (or lack of it) in reducing crime.

❸ **Commission geographical mapping of social problems and their related conditions.**

Congress should require the Departments of Health and Human Services, Justice, Labor, and Commerce to provide it with geographical mapping of the conditions known to be related to crime and other social problems. Among the problem indices that should be mapped:

- ✘ **The different types of crime;**
- ✘ **Drug use;**
- ✘ **Long-term welfare dependency (over two years);**
- ✘ **School performance;**
- ✘ **Out-of-wedlock births;**
- ✘ **Domestic violence, by types;**
- ✘ **Child abuse;**
- ✘ **Sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS.**

Congress also should require information to examine the relationships between other social indicators and the *lack* of crime. Among the social strengths that should be mapped:

- ✔ **Presence of intact primary marriages (comparing these with alternative family structures, from blended families of different types to different forms of single-parent families);**
- ✔ **Attendance of adults and children at religious institutions;**
- ✔ **Religious education indices (attendance at religion-based schools and at supplementary religion classes);**
- ✔ **Volunteer activity in social service associations.**

By mapping at the smallest geographical unit possible (county, zip code, or even smaller), many research benefits can be derived.

❹ **Request research on the effects on children of the intergenerational transmission of the single-parent family structure.**

Congress ought to request summary descriptive and comparative research on how the children of first, second, third, and fourth generation single-parent families fare on indices of health and development, as well as social competence, during and by the end of their growing years. While we do have some knowledge of the impact of out-of-wedlock birth[152] and single-parent family life on children, we do not know about multiple-generation effects. This knowledge could be very salutary.

❺ Reform the welfare system.

Welfare today is a destructive Faustian bargain between all potential mothers and the government. As the condition for receiving cash—as opposed to real community support—the system requires that women and girls abandon the traditional moral code. Explains Heritage Foundation Senior Policy Analyst Robert Rector: "The woman has a contract with the government: She will continue to receive her 'paycheck' as long as she fulfills two conditions: 1) She must not work; and 2) She must not marry an employed male."[153]

Whatever good intentions were served by the welfare system, the evidence shows that its perverse financial incentives discourage the formation of intact families and the pursuit of work.[154] These are the outcomes of the current "community code" on which high-crime neighborhoods are built. Thus, current government policy is a powerful facilitator of the long-term rise in the crime rate.

Legislation is needed to end the destructive features of the welfare system. Instead of sending paychecks to single mothers, such a reformed system should channel money to local institutions and levels of government that can pull the mother toward helping groups in the community and pull the community toward the mother and child in need of help.

Legislation introduced by Senator Lauch Faircloth (R-NC) and Representative James Talent (R-MO) (S.2134 and H.R.4566) in the 103rd Congress takes these necessary steps and would foster a different community code. Money now used to support these broken and unformed families could be given instead to the local community to allow it to decide how best to help families in need, including newly formed, father-abandoned families.[155] The community could disburse this money, at its discretion, to organizations committed to rebuilding the lives of these broken families.

❻ Promote—through leadership in ideas, not national funding—volunteer community efforts, including the efforts of religious institutions.

Amid the social collapse of so many urban neighborhoods, there are stunning examples of successful efforts to turn around the lives of young people previously immersed in crime. These efforts invariably possess two features. One is a strong system of rules within an organization characterized by the love and firm guidance seen in a supportive family. The other is a strong spiritual dimension, most commonly a profound religious commitment.

Examples of this type of program abound.[156]

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152 Fagan, "Rising Illegitimacy: America's Social Catastrophe."

153 Robert Rector, "Combatting Family Disintegration, Crime and Dependence: Welfare Reform and Beyond," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 983, April 8, 1994.

154 *Ibid.*

155 *Ibid.*

156 For information on the following examples and many similar cases, contact the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise in Washington, D.C.; telephone 202-331-1103.

Example: Leon Watkins of South Central Los Angeles, convinced that gangs fill a void for those who join them, helps them do it in a way that bridges to society. According to Watkins, being in a gang is like a religious commitment; there are codes of conduct and service to a higher good than oneself: the gang itself. Watkins shows gang members how to be true to all that attracts them to the gang and yet be true to themselves and society around them. The spiritual inspiration behind all his efforts becomes clear to the youth. They learn how to become aware of the spiritual dimension of their lives.

Example: The Reverend Lee Earl started a church in one of the most desolate sections of Detroit, a neighborhood whose economy was built on drugs, prostitution, and welfare. Within a decade the same neighborhood and the same inhabitants, under the inspiration of the spiritual leadership of Rev. Earl, motivated by a trust in God, had rebuilt their community. They became married families, started small businesses, and rebuilt and bought out their own homes. Crime plummeted and a community was reborn.

Giving people a place to belong and hope in a future, hope communicated through inspiring leadership, is common to all these successes. Giving a neglected child a place to belong—someone to belong to—is communicated through the spirit of a giving person, something beyond social work alone. It involves a long-term personal relationship with a child. These relationships do not take money, but they do take a generous commitment of personal time, as in Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Government cannot purchase these efforts. If it tries, it will vitiate them by turning moral relationships into monetary ones.

❼ Promote, through leadership in ideas, the benefits to the nation of regular worship at religious institutions.

The importance of codes of conduct and religious practice can hardly be overstated. According to the professional literature, active participation in a church significantly correlates with decreased incidence of crime. Expansion of active church membership and religious worship in a community contributes to the reduction of crime.

Government cannot re-empower religious institutions, for their essential nature is moral and spiritual. But it can be less hostile to their traditional areas of competence and mission. The potential for good among many religiously inspired schools, especially in America's inner cities, is well-known. But Congress and the courts insist that the price of government cooperation in education is noncooperation among the three nurturing institutions of family, church, and school. This strategy weakens communities.

❽ Conduct inner-city experiments with school vouchers.

Schools that maintain discipline and strong moral values can help support families that value these virtues and may make a difference in communities that have broken down. Parents need to be able to select such schools when their children are at risk. To give parents this choice, states and localities can be encouraged to offer vouchers to lower-income families. So far states have resisted conducting these experiments. The federal government ought to finance and evaluate six to twelve such local demonstrations.

Recent poll data in California and New Jersey confirm the general pattern of support for vouchers: not surprisingly, it is the poor who most want vouchers for private

schools for their children.[157] The poor well understand the importance of good schools in giving young people in crime-ridden neighborhoods the chance for a productive life. Private and religious schools have the major advantage of being able to instill and enforce a moral code for teachers, children, and parents. This is just the help that parents in fragile, crime-ridden communities desperately need. In the battle between the family and the "Hood," such schools can be crucial allies for parents. Vouchers provide the constitutional and financial means for this close and effective cooperation between school and family in the moral formation of children.

⑨ Remove barriers to adoption.

Many children would have the benefit of a stable, two-parent family—reducing the probability that they would descend into crime—if adoption were made easier. Unfortunately, there are many frustrating barriers to adoption.

The largest barrier is the ethos of the social services establishment, which discourages adoption as the preferred option for a young unmarried mother and her child. The best way to deal with this is to provide competition by allowing other institutions to provide adoption services. One of the best competitors could be the nation's churches, which have great outreach to young pregnant women and to couples desiring to adopt. Black churches are particularly well poised to perform this function and are likely to take care of balancing the needs of the child in racial matching of the parents where possible while also ensuring a speedy adoption, no matter who the parents are. However, liability law needs to be changed to remove obstacles to churches, particularly small churches, wishing to provide this natural form of charity.

⑩ Reduce taxes on marriage and children.

The federal tax code discriminates against the institution of marriage and the raising of children. Since the early 1950s, the tax system each year has increased the tax burden at a much faster rate on families raising children than on any other form of household.[158] Talk of "family" values is largely meaningless if it does not address this central economic relationship between government and family, a relationship that will always be there, no matter the levels of social problems. A government intent on doing its limited best in the long-term prevention of crime will adjust its tax code to reflect the fundamental importance of stable marriage to the social order.

The federal government can and should reform features of the tax code that hurt families with children—particularly low-income working families. One such egregious feature is the "marriage penalty" on fathers and mothers who move from cohabitation to married family status. Another step Congress can take is to enact tax credits or other tax relief for parents with children. Adjusting the tax system to benefit the intact family silently but powerfully upholds marriage and the family.

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157 Luntz Weber Research and Strategic Services, *Lessons from California*, November 1993, and Heritage Foundation *Business/Education Insider* No. 37, June/July 1994.

158 In 1950 the average American family with children paid only 2 percent of its income to the federal government in taxes. Today that same family pays 24.5 percent. See Scott Hodge, "Reducing the Crushing Tax Burden on America's Families," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 981, March 7, 1994.

CONCLUSION

The professional literature of criminology is surprisingly consistent on the real root causes of violent crime: the breakdown of the family and community stability. The sequence has its deepest roots in the absence of stable marriage.

Despite the good news that overall crime rates have dropped in recent years, the frightening news is that both the level and viciousness of teenage violent crime have been rising steadily. More ominous still, this was set in motion sixteen to eighteen years ago, when these violent teenagers where born into chaotic family and social conditions. Since then these conditions have become more prevalent, and we will see a continued rise in violent teenage crime. Furthermore, America is headed toward a 50 percent out-of-wedlock birthrate sometime in the next twelve to twenty years, inching more and more of the country closer to today's inner-city illegitimacy rate. If this trend is not reversed, Americans must prepare for extensive and serious erosion of public safety and practical freedoms.

Government can staff and manage the criminal justice system efficiently and prevent crime in the short term by locking up violent teenage criminals so that they are no longer a danger to others. But it lacks both the capacity and competence to tackle the root causes of crime. That is the mission of three other basic institutions of society: the family, the church, and the school. For close to five decades government has increasingly burdened these institutions—has even become hostile to them. It is now time to help these institutions fulfill their missions by reversing course and removing these burdens.

However, it will take real leadership—leadership through ideas and passionately meant words—to inspire us all to cooperate in rebuilding our marriages, families, neighborhoods, and communities. That is the appropriate work for America's political leaders and statesmen.

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